



Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting: October 2022- Minutes of Meeting			
Date	27/10/2022	Time	10:00AM
Facilitators	Ruba Cheaib	Duration	2 hours
Minutes Prepared by	Ruba Cheaib		
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sector Updates September Assistance CPI and SMEB 2. Presentation from CAMEALOEN on latest research: Leaving no one behind 3. Discussion on BA Sector 2023 Strategy 		
Agencies represented	<p>ACTED; Action Against Hunger (ACF); ARCS - ARCI culture solidali; AVSI;; Cash Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Organizational Network (CAMEALEON); CARE; Caritas Austria; Caritas Lebanon; CISP; DanChurchAid; Danish Refugee Council; DG ECHO; DPNA; FCDO; Inter-Agency Coordination Unit; International Organization for Migration (IOM); Leb Relief; Loubnaniyou; Makhzoumi Foudation; Mercy Corps; Mission East; Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA); Mission East; Movement for Peace (MPDL); Norwegian Refugee Council; Nusaned; Oxfam GB; Plan International;; Relief International; Save the Children (SCI); Salam LADC; SB overseas; Trocaire; UNWomen; UNDP; UNHCR; UNICEF; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; We-World- GVC; WFP; World Vision International</p>		

1. Sector Updates (presented by Ruba Cheaib)

a. Assistance- September 2022- (coming from Activity Info Reporting)

- In September 2022, around 256, 000 households received multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA). Per population group: 192,000 Syrians, 62,000 Lebanese and 9,600 PRS¹.
- Around 127,000 individuals received child specific social assistance mainly through UNICEF's Haddi program and Save the Children's Child Wellbeing program. This includes 72,000 Syrian, 43,000 Lebanese, 10,400 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and 1,100 Palestine refugees from Syria. An announcement has been shared with partners regarding an expected "scale-down" of the coverage of the Haddi program .
- Most assistance under the Sector (namely MPCA to Syrians) is still being disbursed in Lebanese Pounds (LBP). Total USD value disbursed in regular assistance (MPCA and child specific grants) in September was almost \$13M.
- In August, 117 families received mattresses and blankets.
- Details on monthly reporting from Activity info can be found on the BA online dashboard.

b. Consumer Price Index and SMEB:

¹ PRS figures based on August disbursement as reporting not yet finalized.

- The CPI is a key economic indicator that gives us an indication of changing prices of commodities and services in the country. It is released by the Central Administration of Statistics. In September, a 8% monthly increase was recorded and an annual increase of 162%. The three largest increases were in alcoholic beverages and tobacco, transportation and furnishing/household equipment.
- The CPI is used also to update and monitor the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). In the last meeting the comprehensive review of the SMEB was presented following the completion of the annual vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees (VASyR).
- As of September, the total basket stood at just under 10M LBP per family per month. the Food items and NFI prices are tracking through WFP market monitoring while other components use different sources. Between August and September 2022, the SMEB increased by 10%- mainly driven by rent for the non-food component. The baseline rent value for rent is sources from VASyR and will be monitored using the UNHCR protection monitoring data on a quarterly basis. The Education component under the SMEB is still pending and options are still being explored to better estimate costs linked to education.
- Discussions within the core group are in process on updating the methodology to calculated transfer values- mainly stemming from the inaccuracy of income data used in the calculations.

2. Presentation from CAMEALOEN on latest research: Leaving no one behind (presented by Chiara Genovese)

- CAMEALON is a consortium of NRC, Oxfam and Solidarite that delivers MEAL support to the WFP MPC program to Syrians in Lebanon and is funded by the EU, FCDO, GFFO and NSFA.
- Intro: In December 2021, WFP and UNHCR assisted 119,200 Syrian refugee households with monthly MPC transfers to help them meet their food and non-food needs. The transfer value corresponded to 57% of the SMEB for a refugee family of 5. This research looked at the expenditure patterns of Syrian refugee households with specific vulnerability profiles assisted with MPC and their access to services. The research questions were:
 - Do the spending patterns and coping strategies of households with specific vulnerability profiles differ from those of the average MPC recipient?
 - What complementary formal and informal social services do MPC households with specific vulnerabilities have access to?
 - Do these vulnerable households face specific challenges accessing services?
- The research was conducted by a consulting firm Exigo between July 2021 and January 2022
- It aimed to 1) support WFP, donors, and other cash actors in monitoring the adequacy of the transfer value of MPC in relation to the SMEB for specific vulnerable groups, 2) inform refinements of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for the MPCA program, 3) make considerations on which complementary services need to be prioritized to create a safety net for refugees and 4) generate lessons learnt on expenditure analysis.
- Context: The SMEB corresponds to what a refugee family of five needs to survive. It is calibrated based on rights and expenditures, monitored monthly nation-wide. Since 2016, targeting of cash assistance for basic needs is based on a proxy means test. Monthly per-capita expenditures are estimated with an econometric model. The model is recalibrated yearly. The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) aims to capture families that fall through the cracks of the desk formula. This research aimed to explore the expenditure patterns of families that are targeted through the GRM Since 2019, Lebanon has undergone a deep economic, financial, and political crisis. During the time of data collection, subsidies on cooking gas were removed. In May 2022, the Grand Bargain Cash Workstream has reviewed the indicators and guidance to measure MPC outcomes. One indicator is linked to expenditures.
- Demographics: The vulnerability profiles included in this research included HHs with elderly members (household head above 60, no working-age male member available to work); HHs with a

member with a disability and female-headed HHs (household head female, no working-age male member available to work). Data for a sample the average MPC-receiving families were collected for triangulation. HHs with an elderly member are smallest in size (4.9) and have few children. HHs with a member with a disability are largest in size (7) and are more likely to be headed by a man. This indicates that these households pool resources with extended family members to care for the member with disability.

- Findings for all profiles: Households with specific vulnerability profiles are more likely to rely on other forms of CVA (protection cash, cash for rent, etc.) as a secondary source of income, which could indicate that other cash programs use targeting criteria that use these profiles. The lift on subsidies for cooking gas during the time of data collection meant large shifts in traditional expenditure patterns: food and cooking gas are the two largest expenditure shares. Largest expenditure was on food across all profiles and the second was on cooking gas which was in line with the SMEB. Although debt repayment is a component of the SMEB, none of these families were able to repay some of their debt. No households with specific vulnerability reported expenditure on meat and canned food.
- Families with an elderly member: Spend more on medicines compared to other family groups (11% compared to 6–8%), spend less on food (46%) than what is recommended in the SMEB (54%), report a higher need for and access to medical support for chronic illness. They need to make difficult decisions when it comes to their basic needs (i.e. reducing expenditure on food to buy medicine). Thus, a lower expenditure share on food does not indicate less poverty.
- Findings for households with a member with a disability: These households are more likely to report work as a primary source of income. The fact that they are largest in size suggests that there are more members available to work. They spend more (14%) on rent compared to the SMEB (7%), indicating that they prioritize shelter needs to care for their members with a disability over other needs. This is surprising as usually families decide to share their shelter in order to share the rent costs, this doesn't seem to happen for these households. These families have specific needs when it comes to shelter due to the presence of disability. They also have highest (24%) needs for specialized medical support compared to average MPC recipient (13%). However, they report similar levels of access.
- Findings for females headed households: These households are least likely undertake labour as a source of income for those who take on employment, they are more likely to report that children are employed or that work activities are hazardous are more likely (12%) to marry off children as a coping mechanism compared to the average MPC recipient family (5%).
- Lessons learnt on expenditure data: For families below the SMEB, lower food share is not linked with better wellbeing. While the SMEB is calibrated for a refugee family of 5, often families have different sizes (ex. families with disability) and have specific expenditure needs. This the SMEB is calibrated for the average refugees families and does not take in to consideration specific needs. The SMEB also gives a monetary base for poverty measures, while expenditures may not reflect the vulnerability. Coping strategies like child labor may give a false picture based on expenditure.
- Conclusions: The economic and political crisis has taken a heavy toll on Syrian refugee families in Lebanon. Although WFP and UNHCR assist an increasing number of Syrian refugee families with MPC transfers for food and non-food needs, families with specific vulnerabilities face additional needs compared to others. Households with an elderly member reduce the survival consumption of food to meet their health needs. Households with a member with a disability are more likely to pool resources with the extended family to care for the member with a disability. Female-headed households are more likely to rely on emergency forms of negative coping strategies such as child labor and child marriage
- Recommendations: Multi-purpose cash must be complemented with additional resources and social protection measures, particularly in the current economic climate for households with

vulnerabilities. Longer-term stability for vulnerable households can help ease anxiety and reduce reliance on harmful coping strategies. Households with an older member need more support to cover costs related to chronic illnesses. Households with a member with a disability need more support to access critical medical and psychosocial support services. Child protection measures, particularly for female-headed households with no adult male members are critical.

3. BA 2023 Sector Strategy Discussion

- When the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) was renewed in 2021, the renewal was for a two-year plan with annual review.
- The aim of this session is to gather feedback from all concerned stakeholders to consider for the 2023 strategy. Regional consultations are on-going and an initial discussion was held with the BA Core Group.
- Review of 2022 Sector Strategy: The BA Sector feeds in to two of the LCRP strategic objectives. The BA Sector encompasses three outcomes:
 - Outcome 1: Strengthen the ability of vulnerable households and individuals, including female-headed households, persons with disabilities, and children to meet their basic survival needs. This includes regular cash programs (MPCA, child grants and grants for persons with specific needs).
 - Outcome 2: Strengthen the ability of populations affected by seasonal hazards and emergencies to secure additional basic survival needs. This includes both cash and in-kind response (ex. seasonal cash and winter and emergency in-kind response).
 - Outcome 3: Strengthen linkages with national social safety net Programs. This includes linkages with the National Programs and coordination and alignment with social protection systems.
- Refer to slides for detailed lists of Activities under each outcome.
- Lessons learnt (inputs from participants):
 - A main challenge was the level of assistance (transfer values) for some of the partners being far from what it should have been due to funding and other barriers. And while assistance coverage was maintained, the assistance was falling behind in supporting families to meet their basic needs. This has been evident from outcome monitoring findings.
 - Access was also a challenge that has been flagged. Namely linked to high transportation and communication costs.
 - Despite the challenges, high levels of coverage were maintained with regular re-targeting and advances in delivery mechanism. Highlighting the strong and adaptive system. This includes shifting of modalities to cash over the counter.
 - Retro-active payments in the winter effect both reporting cycles but also bring into question the objectives of the interventions.
- Risks and Assumptions (inputs from participants):
 - Challenges with banks and ATMs.
 - Continuous devaluation of the LBP.
 - Funding reductions are expected.
- Mainstreaming (inputs from participants):
 - Gender: Female headed households are in vulnerable situation. This would be important to consider top-ups for these families and linkages with other interventions (cash for work, vocation training). Gender analysis will also be important in terms of both outcomes and process level indicators.
 - On GBV- to consider the communication material to ensure inclusion.
 - Ensuring inclusion of persons with specific vulnerabilities but also acknowledging that MPCA alone may not meet all their needs.